CHAPTER 50

AN ACT concerning public health collaboration and supplementing Title 26 of the Revised Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

C.26:1A-37.11 Findings and declarations.

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. Emerging infectious diseases and public health emergencies pose significant risks to the health, safety, and economic stability of the residents of this State.

b. On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14155, "Withdrawing the United States from the World Health Organization," and formally exited the organization on January 22, 2026. The World Health Organization (WHO) was founded in 1948 with the mission to act as a coordinating authority on international public health issues and emergencies. The United States has been actively engaged with WHO throughout its history. Withdrawal from this organization leaves a void in world health leadership, endangering the safety and wellbeing of billions of people.

c. In 2025, the State established its first official Public Health Institute within the Center for Health Equity and Wellbeing to strengthen public health systems through innovation and collaboration. The State also joined the multi-state Governors' Public Health Alliance and the Northeast Public Health Collaborative, which work to protect public health and facilitate communication and coordination across state lines to address shared public health challenges.

d. New Jersey's strategic location, combined with investments in transportation infrastructure, make the State a vital gateway for commerce and travel, connecting nearly 60 million consumers annually. Therefore, rapid detection, information-sharing, and coordinated response are critical to preventing and mitigating outbreaks of infectious disease.

e. The WHO's Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network is a well-established international technical collaboration that links public health agencies, laboratories, academic institutions, and response organizations to strengthen global outbreak preparedness and response.

f. Participation in the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network does not bind the State or the United States to international legal obligations.

g. Authorizing the New Jersey Department of Health to pursue participation in the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network and other initiatives in international public health will enhance the State's capacity for outbreak preparedness, situational awareness, workforce development, and coordination with domestic and international partners.

C.26:1A-37.12 Definitions.

2. As used in this act:

"Department" means the Department of Health.

"Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network" means the World Health Organization's coordinated network of institutions, including public health agencies, academic centers, laboratories, and response organizations, that collaborate on detecting, verifying, and responding to disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies globally.

"Public health emergency" means an occurrence or imminent threat of an illness or health condition that is believed to be caused by bioterrorism, an epidemic or pandemic disease, or a novel or highly infectious agent that poses a substantial risk of a significant number of human fatalities or incidents of permanent or long-term disability.

C.26:1A-37.13 Department authorized to seek participation in Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network.

3. a. The Department of Health is authorized to take all reasonable and appropriate steps to seek participation in the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network.

b. To carry out the purposes of subsection a. of this section, the department may:

(1) Communicate and coordinate with the World Health Organization and the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network operational support team;

(2) Submit expressions of interest, applications, or other documentation required for participation;

(3) Designate one or more offices, divisions, or programs within the department to serve as points of contact for the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network related activities;

(4) Participate in technical consultations, trainings, exercises, and information-sharing activities consistent with the mission of the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network; and

(5) Collaborate with federal, State, local, academic, and nonprofit partners, as appropriate, to support outbreak preparedness and response activities.

C.26:1A-37.14 Construction of act relative to State and federal law.

4. a. Nothing in this act shall be construed to:

(1) establish membership of the State in the World Health Organization;

(2) authorize the department to enter into any agreement or undertaking that conflicts with federal law or the United States Constitution;

(3) permit the disclosure of confidential or personally identifiable health information except as otherwise authorized by State or federal law; or

(4) require the expenditure of funds beyond those appropriated or otherwise made available to the department.

C.26:1A-37.15 Commissioner to submit report to Governor, Legislature.

5. a. The Commissioner of Health, within 18 months following the effective date of this act and subject to the availability of funds, shall submit a report to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), to the Legislature.

b. The report shall include a description of actions taken by the Department of Health to pursue participation in the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network, the status of the department's participation in, or application to, the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network, a summary of any benefits, challenges, or resource needs identified through such participation or application, and any recommendations for further legislative or administrative action, including, but not limited to, participation in other international public health initiatives, as appropriate.

c. The department shall post the report required pursuant to this section on its Internet website.

6. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved July 22, 2026.